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SUBJECT: PKK Issue: Update on Violence and Political Developments  
(February 16-28, 2007)

REF: ANKARA 00339 AND PREVIOUS

(U) Sensitive but unclassified - please protect accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) This is another in a series of periodic reports on PKK violence in Turkey. Our primary sources for these reports are mainstream Turkish press services, such as the Anatolian News Agency, and international wire services. While these are more reliable than most Turkish press sources, they are not necessarily unimpeachable. Another source is the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff (TGS) website which documents contacts/clashes with the PKK. Press services sympathetic to the PKK, such as Neu-Isenburg People's Defense Forces and Firat News Agency, tend to report higher numbers of the Turkish Security Forces casualties and are often otherwise unreliable.

¶2. (U) During the February 16-28, 2007 period one child died when a PKK bomb exploded near a Jandarma station in Siirt province. There were clashes between security forces and PKK terrorists in the mountainous Bitlis province; no casualties were reported. Security forces arrested two PKK terrorists in Sirnak and Van provinces. Security forces seized booby-trapped lan  S:

- Feb. 18 dailieskanit, who was visiting Barzani and Talabani the PKK. Buyukanit sai@ had nothing to discuss  
Oties that view PKK as a political entity. "But I will not meddle if somebody wants to hold political contacts," he added.  
- Feb. 18 dailies quoted FM Gul as responding to the Buyukanit by saying that the politicians should carry out dialogue before the military speaks with weapons.  
- FM Gul told the press Feb. 23 that "Talabani and Barzani have already held contacts in Turkey. Our meetings with them will not amount to recognition of a separate independent region. We can talk to them to show them their mistakes." Gul warned that "the division of Iraq will pave the way for unending wars."

- GOT Special Envoy GEN Baser told a television reporter Feb. 23 that pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) Diyarbakir Provincial Chief Aydogdu -- who had said that a Turkish attack on Kirkuk would be regarded as an attack on Diyarbakir -- was a "creature." Baser said that nobody would be able to turn Turkey into another Yugoslavia by giving prominence to ethnicity. Baser stressed that what "that creature," meaning Aydogdu, was seeking such a thing.

- FM Gul was quoted in Feb. 25 dailies as emphasizing that protecting the unity of Iraq was Turkey's first priority; northern Iraq issues come second. Gul added that leaders and arms of many terrorist organizations were in northern Iraq. When asked about President Sezer not receiving Talabani, Gul said, "That is the President's choice. Like it or not he (Talabani) is the President of that country."

- Feb. 28 dailies quoted FM Gul as giving a harsh response to the words of KRG President Barzani that Turkey should prepare itself for the independence of Kurdistan. En route to Turkey after his contacts in Kabul, Gul noted that people have always suffered as a result of irrational moves of their leaders. He stressed that the Kurds should be realistic in their aspirations, and drew attention to the example of Saddam Hussein.

-- KURDISH:

- The Feb. 19 "Hurriyet" quoted DTP Chairman Ahmet Turk as saying that Turkey's hostile approach toward the Iraqi Kurds would also harm Turkey. Turk said that Turkey should regard the Iraq Kurds as its brothers as it regarded people in Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan.

- DTP Diyarbakir Provincial Chairman Ibrahim Aydogdu told the press Feb. 21 the party would invite Talabani and Barzani to Nevruz celebrations on March 21. He added that such a move would honor and please all Kurds in Turkey. Aydogdu also said that he would consider a Turkish attack on Kirkuk as an attack on Diyarbakir.

- In a Feb. 26 interview with NTV television, KRG President Barzani rejected reports that he was supporting PKK. "If there is evidence in this respect, it should be revealed publicly. We don't approve PKK presence in Qandil Mountains. It is not easy to control the border," Barzani asserted. He pointed out that the PKK was active not only in northern Iraq, but also in Diyarbakir, Van and Istanbul. "Should we blame Turkey for this?" he asked. He stressed that dialogue was the best formula for solving the PKK problem.

- Feb. 28 wire services reported that at the DTP extraordinary convention the same day Chairman Ahmet Turk said that the party will run in November parliamentary elections with independent candidates. Declaring that an environment must be created within which the Kurdish people will live on an equal, free, and humane basis, Turk said that on the day that Turkey escapes from its phobia of being divided, "it will solve the Kurdish issue."

-- OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

- Abdullah Ocalan managed to get out of prison through his lawyers pages of his draft book and the "Prison Writings: The Roots of Civilization" was published in Britain. "Hurriyet" on Feb 19 wrote that Ankara conveyed its unease over this development to HMG through diplomatic channels.

- "Aksam" on Feb. 21 reported that TGS has prepared a detailed report on the contacts of KDP and PUK with PKK and the special protection granted by Kurdish leaders Talabani and Barzani to and officials agreed tity measures to boost bx measures to be appliepions on March 21 also Following are selectedcles

on the topic:

- Cengiz Candar in the Feb. 16 "Referans" expressed doubt whether Ankara could succeed by sidestepping the Iraqi Kurdish leadership as it tried to resolve the PKK and Kirkuk issues through the U.S. He termed PM Erdogan's positive remarks about dialogue with the Iraqis Kurds as the "right approach." Candar wondered whether the GOT would continue to pursue this policy over TGS objections.

- Ilter Turkmen in February 20 "Hurriyet" found it strange that when they were abroad both the PM and the TGS Chief made comments on talking to Iraq Kurdish issue. He stressed that on such a major issue the GOT should have determined the policy after talking to the military and once the policy was set, the military should have abided by the GOT decision. Turkmen complained that not only on Iraq but on other major issues, too, Turkey could not be creative and take initiative. He claimed that Turkey, always with domestic

policy concerns, preferred the "zero risk" option, which, in the long run, kept increasing the risks.

- Mehmet Ali Birand in February 20 "Posta" alleged that GEN Buyukanit opposed the military, and not the civilian government, to talk to northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders. Birand complained about a lack of basic policy toward Iraq. He claimed that Turkey could neither differentiate between the PKK and the Kurdish issue, nor could adopt a common policy toward northern Iraq.

- Hasan Cemal February 20 "Milliyet" wrote that GEN Buyukanit might think differently than the political authority on very important issues of Turkey but it would be more appropriate if he had explained them behind closed doors and at Constitutional platforms.

- Murat Yetkin February 20 "Radikal" wondered whether some Turkish security members, without the knowledge and approval of Ankara, tried to create a de facto situation in Iraq and that if the consequence was the Suleymaniye incident (in July 2003), then the

Turkish public should know about this. He reminded that many scenarios were circulating in diplomatic circles about what actually happened in Suleymaniye. Yetkin noted that sharing the facts with the public would help Turkey avoid similar situations in the future.

- Ertugrul Ozkok in February 21 "Hurriyet" asked what had actually happened in Suleymaniye when the American troops put hoods on the heads of Turkish soldiers? Ozkok checked and found out that the military careers of all Turkish officers who were involved ended, while the American officers were promoted. He asked whether the Turkish troops, without informing the TGS, tried to carry out some operations and assassinate some important figures in northern Iraq?

- Fikret Bila in February 21 "Milliyet" wrote that while the PM and the FM favored meeting with northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders, the President and the TGS Chief opposed the idea. He wrote that although the GOT planned a meeting in February with Kurdish leaders in Istanbul, it decided to take a back step when the TGS Chief spoke against it in Washington. He also quoted CHP leader Baykal as listing the two conditions for establishing good relations with northern Iraq: They should be sincere in the fight against terrorism and they must make the PKK ineffective. Bila asked the GOT to elaborate its own position on the issue.

- Can Dundar in February 22, "Milliyet" asked why the NSC existed? Dundar wrote that following the TGS Chief GEN Buyukanit's comment on not talking to Iraqi Kurdish leaders, the GOT took a back step and suspended a dialogue process with the Iraqi Kurds. He added that from now on when the GOT took a step in the diplomatic field, it won't be taken sea tasking in the Constitution according to which the President was supposed to make sure that state organs operate Qhzed fashion. He askedt invite the sides ov@each a consensus and why such issues were not discussed at the NSC meetings?

- Semih Idiz February 22, "Milliyet" referred to a joint statement by Barzani and Talabani denying reports that they were providing the PKK with material to make bombs. Idiz reminded that the allegation did not come from an ordinary person but the highest-level Turkish military officer. Thus he concluded that this proved that there were very serious problems not only between Turkey and Iraqi Kurds, but between Turkey and the U.S. as well. Idiz wondered how one could claim that GEN Buyukanit's meetings in Washington were very successful under these circumstances.

- Ibrahim Karagul in February 22, "Yeni Safak" wrote that on January 28, U.S. Special Envoy Ralston, at his meeting with Barzani and Kosrat Resul allegedly indicated that they would show a green light to an operation against the PKK. It was claimed that the operation against the Mount Kandil would begin in early April. Karagul wondered whether the U.S. showed a green light to Turkey in order to bar it from approaching Iran. He added that during his visit to Ankara Iranian FM Muttaki proposed cooperation in the nuclear field. He also invited Turkey to explore and process oil and natural gas. Karagul noted that while the U.S. tried to pull Turkey to its side on the Iran issue, Tehran was showing effort for Ankara to remain at

least impartial.

- Fikret Bila on February 23 "Milliyet" wrote that the basic issue on today's NSC meeting would be the PKK and northern Iraq. Bila noted that TGS Chief GEN Buyukanit would present to the NSC the visual evidence of what he had said in the U.S. The TGS reportedly prepared a detailed video briefing on the PKK activities in northern Iraq, its movements along the border and the support and assistance it received in northern Iraq. The military today would present this to the President and the GOT at the NSC. The video would prove that currently the major supporters of the PKK were the two groups in northern Iraq. Buyukanit would prove how the KDP and PUK provided assistance to the PKK. He would show how the PKK got arms and explosives. Bila wrote that on the eve of the NSC meeting,

Buyukanit and force commanders had dinner at the Sheraton yesterday evening.

- Guneri Civaoglu on February 23 "Milliyet" quoted DTP Diyarbakir Provincial Chairman Ibrahim Aydogdu as saying that a Turkish intervention into Kerkuk would be regarded as an offensive on Diyarbakir. Civaoglu claimed that this rhetoric was closer to the theory that one would pacify the Kurdish issue by putting Ocalan to jail did not produce the desired result.

- Murat Yetkin on February 23 "Radikal" wrote that the anti-terror high council meeting yesterday was like a rehearsal of today's NSC meeting. Aside from the PKK, the NSC today reportedly would take up the Armenian resolution, Iran and Cyprus. He also referred to some notorious incidents at previous NSC meetings in February and those were the February 28 (process) and February 19 NSC (where Sezer threw the Constitution to the PM). Yetkin reminded that the last NSC meeting that President Sezer would chair would be held in late April.

- Taha Akyol in February 26, "Milliyet" referred to two rhetoric coming from the DTP lately. First, was the re-introduction of the slogan, "There are 20 million Kurds in Turkey." The second, was equating Kerkuk with Diyarbakir. Akyol wrote that if that was the figure then there should be around 12 million Kurdish voters but the DTP got less than 2 million votes in the last elections. Given these figures, he asked how could the DTP speak in the name of Kurdish citizens. On Kerkuk, Akyol claimed that a Kurdish citizen won't think that Kerkuk belonged to Kurds just out of sentiments of kinship. He reminded that the right policy would be to claim that Kerkuk belonged to Iraqis. Akyol noted that equating Kerkuk with Diyarbakir was beyond sentiments of kinship and that it was indicating a separate motherland and citizenship. He warned that if a few Turkish provinces were turned into a "Kurdistan" then the rest would be "Turkistan" and that this would bring a lot of bloodshed.

- Semih Idiz in February 26, "Milliyet" stressed on the importance of referring in the latest NSC announcement to "intensifying political and diplomatic efforts" in relations with northern Iraq. Following this announcement when asked whether they would talk to northern Iraq leader, PM Erdogan said, "We would look for a solution at the table. Nobody should drag us anywhere else (but the table)."

Idiz noted that according to some at the NSC meeting there was a tough debate between the GOT and the military but others denied it. He expressed hope that Iraqi Kurds, too, would interpret this announcement correctly and let possible good relations with Turkey go down the drain. He stressed that Iraqi Kurds should finally realize the legitimate complaints of Turkey.

- Yavuz Donat in February 26, "Sabah" quoted Diyarbakir's Yenisehir Mayor Firat Anli as commenting on the DTP conven on the CHP ticket as one option. The second option was to run as part of a broad Social democrat bloc like Italy's olive branch model. The third option was to run independently. Anli added that since they won't run with the CHP and since the second model was not feasible for the time being,

the local people reportedly preferred to see independent (DTP) candidates.

- Ismet Berkan in February 26, "Radikal" wrote that there was no doubt that the PKK was receiving support from northern Iraq and that it was getting this support from the official and legitimate administration in that region. He reminded that the PKK leaders

down there recently appeared on the Barzani-controlled TV station. Berkan stressed that in essence, TGS Chief GEN Buyukanit was right and that the PKK officially was supported there. He also reminded that for years Syria officially supported the PKK but then the TGS Chief never refused to talk to Syrians. Berkan noted that Turkey should talk to northern Iraq and Baghdad, as it did in the past with

Syria but admitted that the real issue was not over whether one talked or not talked to these leaders. The real issue (between the GOT and the military) should be something else, he wrote.

WILSON